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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the status of local secondary vocational education advisory councils in Iowa. Phase 1 of the study surveyed 709 secondary vocational education programs to identify programs utilizing local advisory councils, composition of these councils, and names of leading council members. Phase 2 collected data from 218 teachers and 160 council members relating to council operation procedures, council effectiveness, and satisfaction with the council. Of the 709 teachers responding to the survey, 431 indicated their program utilized a local advisory council. The distribution of the respondents by areas was 231 from agriculture, 47 from distributive education, 3 from health, 271 from home economics, 51 from office, 97 from trades and industry, and 9 from multioccupational programs. A representative council met once or twice during the year and contained eight members. The typical council included one professional educator, four employers, and various other types of members based on program area. The second phase of the study revealed a need for local advisory councils to strengthen their operational activities. On a statewide basis there seems to be a need for more programs to provide a formalized orientation for new council members. (LRA)

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QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

STATUS OF LOCAL SECONDARY ADVISORY COUNCILS

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

A primary tenet of the American educational system is public involvement in the educational process. Public involvement or citizen participation in education can be traced from the middle ages through colonial America to the present day. It encompasses a wide range of ideas, issues, programs, and mechanisms.

One of the primary mechanisms available to provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss issues, analyze inputs, and provide recommendations affecting the direction of an education program is the advisory committee or council. The need for and value of advisory councils in vocational education can be traced to the early twentieth century. However, little advantage was taken of this potential bridge between the school and the public despite the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act.

Several changes following World War II created a revitalization of citizen interest in the schools and in the utilization of advisory councils. Included in the changes were increased pressure for public involvement in education, clashes in viewpoints concerning economic and social issues, rapid technological growth, and citizen questioning of basic policies and practices.

These changes called for new relationships between vocational education and the community. Federal legislation has reflected the growing importance of advisory council involvement in vocational education. The 1968 and 1976 Vocational Education Amendments have resulted in three major mandates regarding advisory councils: provision of a permanent National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, creation of state advisory councils as a condition for receiving funds, and establishment of local advisory councils as a prerequisite for financial assistance.

Research on vocational education advisory councils prior to 1968 is quite limited. Most of the studies since that time have focused on the nature and scope of local advisory councils. Studies on secondary level councils have been conducted by Bennett (1974), Rogan (1973), Nagel (1973), and Ramey (1975). Their findings indicate that vocational education advisory councils were most directly involved in developing curriculum, placing students for on-the-job training, analyzing community needs, improving local public relations, determining objectives, and recommending course content and sequence.

Fewer studies have investigated how individuals regard advisory councils and how effective local councils are. Allen (1971) found limited agreement among 47 North Carolina secondary vocational education directors on the role of advisory councils in programming. However, Henning (1971) found higher levels of agreement in relationship to curriculum planning between council members and teachers. This position with respect to curriculum was substantiated by Lohren (1970). Further research is needed on the quality of local vocational education advisory councils (Cochran, Phelps, Cochran, 1979).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the status of local secondary vocational education advisory councils in Iowa. Specific objectives were:

1. To determine the number and structure of local councils.
2. To obtain information on the operation of local councils.
3. To ascertain the perceptions of instructors and council members regarding council effectiveness and satisfaction with the council.
4. To investigate the relationships between perceived council effectiveness and satisfaction with the council.

5. To compare effectiveness perceptions held by instructors and council members in different vocational education program areas.

Method

The study was conducted in two phases. A postcard questionnaire was sent to all secondary vocational education teachers in Phase I. The questionnaire was designed to identify programs utilizing local advisory councils, composition of these councils, and names and addresses of leading council members. Data were collected on 709 programs, 86% of all secondary vocational education programs in Iowa.

A more detailed questionnaire was developed for the second phase of the study. Questions dealt with council operating procedures, council effectiveness, and satisfaction with the council. This was sent to a random sample of 291 teachers and 300 advisory council members. Usable data were provided by 218 teachers and 160 council members.

Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze Phase I data and the information on operating procedures and satisfaction with the council obtained during Phase II. Responses of teachers and council members to questions on council effectiveness were factor analyzed. Initial factors were extracted using Principal Components Analysis and rotated using Varimax procedures. Factors with eigen values 1.0 or greater were retained. Effectiveness factors were correlated with satisfaction items to examine relationships between perceived council effectiveness and satisfaction. Multivariate analysis of variance procedures were used to analyze differences between teachers and council members and between vocational program areas. Group means were calculated to interpret significant F-ratios.

Findings

Phase I

Of the 709 secondary vocational education teachers responding to the postcard survey, 431 indicated their program utilized a local advisory council. The distribution of the respondents by vocational program areas was 231 from agriculture, 47 from distributive education, 3 from health, 271 from home economics, 51 from office, 97 from trades and industry, and 9 from multioccupational programs.

A representative council met once or twice during the year and contained eight members. The typical council included one professional educator, four employers, and varied other types of members based on program area. In a majority of the cases, the council was chaired by a professional school employee.

Phase II

Respondents for the second phase of the study were distributed by program area as follows: agriculture, 110; distributive education, 25; health, 3; home economics, 152; office, 28; trades and industry, 55; and multioccupations, 5. Phase II data were divided into four broad categories: council operation, council functions, council effectiveness, and satisfaction with council.

Council operation. Findings on operating procedures followed by local secondary advisory councils were broken down into two subcategories: "appointment and service" and "operating and administrative procedures." Teachers' and council members' responses are reported.

Selected "appointment and service" characteristics of secondary vocational education advisory councils are found in Table 1. Teachers and

and council members generally agreed on the average term for council members, the average length of council meetings, and the advance notification of meetings received. They also responded similarly with respect to the number of male and female council members.

Insert Table 1 Here

A summary of appointment, orientation, and recognition procedures utilized by local councils in Iowa is presented in Table 2. Approximately one half of both groups of respondents, teachers and council members, indicated that the council was appointed by the teacher. Teachers and council members agreed that the most common methods used to select the council chairperson were election by the council or assumption by the teacher.

Insert Table 2 Here

Questions on orientation procedures followed by local councils dealt with the technique(s) used to orient new members and the topic(s) included in the orientation. Oral presentations were utilized most frequently. It is important to note that 28% of the teachers and 32% of the council members responded that there was no organized orientation for new members. Both groups responded that the role of the council and program goals were the topics most often included.

An indicator of the recognition received by local councils is found in the response to two questions. The first dealt with individual(s) to whom council recommendations were sent and the second concerned the method(s) used to recognize council members. Recommendations often went no further than the secondary teacher according to 39% of the teachers and 32% of the council members. Members were most frequently recognized by letters of thanks, with teachers and council members disagreeing on the second most frequently used method.

"Operating and administrative procedures" employed by secondary advisory councils are presented in Table 3. The most important finding from these data is the relative lack of activities related to the administration and operation of local councils. With the exception of minutes filed, less than 60% of the respondents in both groups indicated the activities occurred. The validity of teachers' responses indicating 69% filed minutes is questionable since only 31% responded that minutes were kept.

Insert Table 3 Here

A second important finding regarding "operating and administrative procedures" is related to the differences in perceptions between teachers and council members. In every instance teachers reported greater use of these activities than council members. This suggests a lack of communication between the two groups with respect to council administration and operation.

Involvement of secondary councils in 23 common advisory council functions are found in Table 4. Functions performed by 80% or more of the councils reported by both teachers and council members were related to planning and evaluating programs. Specific functions included determining course relevancy, evaluating programs, recommending content, developing objectives, and reviewing the instructional value of projects. These findings support those of Bennett (1974), Rogan (1973), Nagel (1973), and Ramey (1975).

Insert Table 4 Here

A comparison of teachers' responses and council members' responses shows that they generally agreed on council involvement in the functions mentioned above. Teachers and council members disagreed on the most common function of local councils. Communication with the community was the teachers' response and development of objectives was the council members' response. Teachers recognize that advisory councils can help to build good relationships with the community, and this may be the reason for their response. Actual activities carried out by local councils may not be as directly related to this function.

Council effectiveness. Respondents were asked to rate how effective their local council was in carrying out these council functions on a 5-point Likert-type scale. A rating of 1 indicated the council was very ineffective, 3 neither ineffective nor effective, and 5 very effective.

Effectiveness perceptions were factor analyzed. Four factors, accounting for 89.8% of the total variance, resulted. The factors and their corresponding reliabilities are: I Advising on Equipment, Facilities, and

Materials, .92; II Planning and Evaluating Curriculum, .93; III Promoting Programs, .84; and IV Recruiting and Placing Students, .85. Items included in the factors, item loadings, and factor means are presented in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 Here

Inspection of the factor mean scores indicates that secondary advisory councils were at best neither ineffective nor effective in carrying out their functions. They were considered ineffective with respect to Factors I and IV. These perceptions about the relative ineffectiveness of Iowa's secondary vocational education advisory councils are similar to the findings of Danenburg, Keene, and Miller (1975), Land (1971), and McInnis (1971) on postsecondary advisory councils.

Satisfaction with council. Satisfaction with the advisory council's performance was another major area addressed. Respondents reported their degree of satisfaction with 10 items dealing with council functions, acceptance of council action, and council visibility on a 5-point scale. A low rating (1) indicated dissatisfaction and a high rating (5) satisfaction. Table 6 presents means and standard deviations for teachers and council members on the 10 satisfaction items.

Insert Table 6 Here

Examining the satisfaction mean scores shows that both teachers and council members tended to be on the satisfied end of the scale.

Satisfaction was greater for items related to council functions and acceptance of council action than it was for council visibility items. Council members were more satisfied than teachers, with their mean scores being 0.2 to 0.3 higher than teachers.

Effectiveness-satisfaction relationships. The fourth objective of this study was to investigate relationships between council effectiveness and satisfaction with the council. Effectiveness factors were correlated with the satisfaction items to examine possible relationships (See Table 7).

Insert Table 7 Here

All four effectiveness clusters were significantly correlated with all 10 satisfaction items. Satisfaction item 6, overall value of the council to the program, was highly correlated (.30 or greater) with the four effectiveness factors. The only other high correlations were between satisfaction items 5 and 10, and effectiveness factor II, Planning and Evaluating Curriculum.

Differences on effectiveness perceptions. The final objective was to study differences in peprceptions of council effectiveness among vocational program areas and between teachers and council members. Two-way analyses of variance using program area and type of respondent as main effects were utilized. F-ratios resulting from these analyses are presented in Table 8. No significant interactions were found between program area and type of respondent. Factor mean scores for subgroups were inspected to interpret significant F-ratios.

Insert Table 8 Here

Significant overall F-ratios were found for all four effectiveness factors. In each case, program area was a significant main effect. Type of respondent, teacher or council member, was not a significant main effect for any factor.

Agricultural and trades and industrial programs were considered significantly more effective for factor I. Advising on Facilities, Equipment, and Materials. Distributive education and office occupations councils were least effective in performing these functions. The nature of the vocational program may be used to explain why agricultural and trades and industrial councils were most effective. These programs rely heavily on local councils to keep teaches informed of new equipment being used and to recommend what would be appropriate for the local program to purchase in preparing students for these occupational areas.

Program councils with the highest effectiveness scores for factor II were agriculture and home economics. Distributive education and office occupations had the lowest scores with respect of planning and evaluating curriculum. This may be a reflection of the preparation received by agriculture and home economics teachers. Teacher training institutions may place more emphasis on this advisory council funtion in their programs.

Greatest council effectiveness on promoting programs, factor III, was found for trades and industrial, office occupations, and distributive

education councils. Home economics advisory councils were perceived as least effective in the promotion area. This suggests that home economics programs are not involving local advisory councils in the promotion of their programs. An advisory council could help the program expand its image beyond just cooking and sewing.

Home economics was also the least effective program area for factor IV. The remaining program areas - agriculture, distributive, education, office occupations, and trades and industry - were significantly more effective in recruiting and placing students. Here again the nature of the program may be an explanation. For example, secondary home economics programs in Iowa are predominately consumer and homemaking programs and not occupational home economics programs. The program is not concerned with placing students in jobs. For this reacon, it is unlikely that local home economics advisory councils would consider themselves effective in performing the functions included in IV, Recruiting and Placing Students.

Conclusions

Results of the findings of this study lead to several conclusions about the quantity and quality of local secondary vocational education advisory councils. First, there is a relative lack of local councils despite such a mandate in Public Law 94-482. Local vocational teachers and school administrators need to be informed of the importance and contributions to be made by local councils. Local policies regarding advisory councils need to be formulated.

Secondly, the second phase of the study revealed a need for local advisory councils to strengthen their "operational" activities. On a statewide basis there seems to be a need for more programs to provide a formalized orientation for new council members.

A third conclusion is drawn from the data on functions performed by local councils and council effectiveness. There appears to be a lack of participation by local councils in functions considered to be part of a model council's operation. Councils are not performing activities indicative of an effective council, therefore they are not perceived as being effective. More direction is needed at the state level, either from the state department of education, the state advisory council, or the teacher education institutions. Assistance is needed to help local councils develop an operational design for effective performance of council functions.

Finally, differences in council effectiveness by program area suggest that a uniform set of council functions for all vocational areas is inappropriate. The development of a state handbook on local advisory councils should provide a common element for all program areas to use as a guideline. It is important, however, that this handbook contain suggestions for adaptations by program area. These materials would be a valuable aid for new teachers and programs as they establish local advisory councils. In addition, current teachers and programs would have a model to compare their present council operation to and thereby identify areas needing improvement.

Table 1. Selected characteristics of secondary advisory councils

Characteristic	Teachers		Council Members	
	Mean	S. D.[a]	Mean	S. D.
Term (years)	2.5	1.0	2.4	1.3
Meeting length (hours)	1.6	.6	1.8	.8
Meeting notification (days)	11.3	7.7	12.0	11.3
Male members	5.7	3.0	5.7	3.7
Female members	4.8	3.2	5.1	3.0

[a]S. D. refers to standard deviation.

Table 2. Secondary advisory council appointment, orientation, and recognition procedures

Procedure	% of Teachers	% of Council Members
Council appointed by:		
teacher	46	52
advisory council	20	13
school administrator	11	7
other	23	28
Chairpersonship is:		
elected by council	44	44
assumed by teacher	38	34
appointed by teacher	12	8
other	6	14
Council oriented by:		
oral presentation	50	51
handbook distribution	16	11
audiovisual presentation	5	6
no organized orientation	28	32
Orientation includes:		
role of council	60	48
program goals	60	49
vocational education goals	41	49
council goals	36	39
school goals	23	29
council activities	23	23
legislation	17	18
Recommendations forwarded to:		
vocational teacher	39	32
school administrator	26	27
board of education	10	20
vocational director	18	14
not forwarded	7	7
Members recognized by:		
letters of thanks	51	46
news releases	20	8
certificates	16	11
special event	9	9
other	17	23

Table 3. Secondary advisory council operating and administrative procedures

Procedure	Teachers			Council Members		
	% yes	% no	% don't know	% yes	% no	% don't know
Board authorization	41	30	29	8	55	37
Appointment notification	28	70	2	16	79	5
Appointment length	52	42	6	33	43	24
Terms staggered	43	51	6	27	38	35
Written agenda	45	54	1	41	56	3
Minutes kept	31	68	1	23	66	11
Minutes acted on	52	41	7	40	46	14
Minutes filed	69	28	3	26	21	53
Recommendations forwarded	55	38	7	25	51	24
Members recognized	22	72	6	19	62	19

Table 4. Functions performed by secondary advisory councils

Function	% of Teachers	% of Council Members
Communicate with community	95	67
Determine course relevancy	93	85
Evaluate programs	88	82
Recommen content	88	81
Develop objectives	86	89
Review projects	84	80
Identify needed skills	83	78
Identify labor market needs	81	69
Advise on equipment, etc.	79	69
Link school and industry	79	66
Inform teachers of new methods	75	67
Establish course sequence	70	79
Recommend employability standards	69	66
Eliminate sex bias	66	59
Develop continuing education	64	56
Plan facilities	62	62
Recruit students	61	63
Place graduates	60	49
Identify training sites	59	55
Select materials	57	54
Advise on budget	55	51
Assist in follow-up	43	41
Plan for special needs students	42	43

Table 5. Item loadings and factor means for secondary advisory council effectiveness factors

	Item	Loading	Mean
I	Advising on Equipment, Facilities and Materials		1.99
	Advise on budget	.75	
	Select materials	.74	
	Plan for special needs students	.65	
	Advise on equipment, etc.	.63	
	Plan facilities	.53	
	Develop continuing education	.48	
II	Planning and Evaluating Curriculum		2.98
	Determine course relevancy	.80	
	Evaluate program	.75	
	Establish course sequence	.57	
	Develop objectives	.53	
	Recommend content	.50	
	Eliminate sex bias	.47	
	Review projects	.46	
III	Promoting Programs		2.77
	Communicate with community	.76	
	Link school and industry	.72	
	Inform teachers new methods	.63	
	Recommend employability standards	.49	
IV	Recruiting and Placing Students		1.71
	Place graduates	.73	
	Assist in follow-up	.72	
	Identify training sites	.57	
	Recruit students	.53	

Table 6. Satisfaction with secondary advisory councils

Item	Teachers		Council Members	
	Mean	S. D.[a]	Mean	S. D.
Council Functions				
Advice sought by teacher	3.7	.9	4.0	.9
Assumption of responsibility	3.6	1.0	3.8	.9
Understanding of responsibilities	3.4	.9	3.5	1.0
Acceptance of Council Action				
Advice followed by teacher	3.8	.6	4.0	.8
Way recommendations forwarded	3.5	.8	3.6	.9
Acceptance of recommendations	3.4	.9	3.6	.8
Council Visibility				
Value of council	3.7	.9	3.7	1.0
Recognition received	3.1	.8	3.5	.8
Publicity received	3.0	.9	3.3	1.0
Assistance provided by state agencies	2.9	.9	3.2	.8
Combined Averages				
Council functions	3.6	.1	3.8	.2
Acceptance of council action	3.6	.2	3.7	.2
Council visibility	3.2	.3	3.4	.1

[a]S. D. refers to standard deviation.

Table 7. Correlations[a] between council effectiveness factors and satisfaction items.

	Variable	E1[b]	E2	E3	E4
S1	Way recommendations forwarded	22**	24**	26**	25**
S2	Acceptance of recommendations	12*	10*	12*	11*
S3	Assumption of responsibility	21**	23**	17**	13*
S4	Assistance from state agencies	14**	19**	8*	11*
S5	Advice sought by teacher	23**	32**	26**	20**
S6	Value of council	31**	37**	37**	33**
S7	Advice followed by teacher	19**	24**	24**	17**
S8	Publicity received	16**	16**	13*	13*
S9	Recognition received	12*	23**	21**	20**
S10	Understanding of responsibilities	22**	32**	28**	21**

[a]Decimal points have been removed.

[b]Variables E1-E4 are the four effectiveness factors: I Advising on Equipment, Facilities, and Materials; II Planning and Evaluating Curriculum; III Promoting Programs; and IV Recruiting and Placing Students.

* Significant at $p<0.05$.

** Significant at $p<0.01$.

Table 8. F-ratios for program area and type of respondent as related to council effectiveness.

Factor		F-ratios			
		Overall	Program	Respondent	Program/ Respondent Interaction
I	Advising on Equipment, Facilities, and Materials	4.33**	4.94**	.00	.83
II	Planning and Evaluating Curriculum	2.36*	2.72*	.02	1.09
III	Promoting Programs	8.66**	9.19**	1.85	.63
IV	Recruiting and Placing Students	6.95**	7.61**	.95	.89

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